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IN building a house the architect should first study the uninhabited site, and should create a harmony between the house itself and its surroundings. He should avoid making the house a freak on the one hand, or a mere replica of academic forms on the other. It matters little what particular style the house may affect, provided the treatment is modern, candid, frank and rational.

WE may admire symmetry, like the Greeks, but, like the Greeks also, we should not allow it to enslave us. Whether we are erecting a modest dwelling or an ostentatious abode, every feature should possess a likeness and loveliness characteristic of the spacious era in which we live. Society is more polite and the individual has greater freedom of action than in any past era. Dress and draperies are more delicate, and as our habits become more luxurious we desire greater beauty in our surroundings.

THEN, again, the greater variety of the building materials at our disposal suggests a different treatment of our constructions. If the ancients knew as much about building materials as we do, they would undoubtedly have constructed differently, and if they knew as much as we about the new materials that have been brought into service, many changes would have taken place both in the elevation and plans of their buildings. It may be observed that when the citizen of our own times constructs his dwelling in imitation of a Greek temple, with wooden Doric columns for the portico—a style of building which, however useful for the housing of a pagan deity and its attending priests—his work does not certainly accord with the new ideas of life that characterize our modern civilization, so different from that of the rigid, hieratic and despotic periods of the past.

THE modern transatlantic steamship, with its vast carrying capacity, its inviting and comfortable cabins, its spacious and highly decorated banqueting hall, the tremendous power of its machinery, that drives the vessel across the ocean with vast speed, the electric lights, the decorative cabinets and buffets, the superbly carven, gilded and painted woodwork, with the sense of luxury and power that such an environment imparts to the individual, is a true type of the

most fortunate period of civilization; and it would be the height of absurdity for our navigators to build their vessels after the style of the Roman galley or the Spanish caravel of the time of Columbus; as of the modern householder to construct his dwelling after the manner of a Greek temple or a Pompeian villa.

AN excellent feature of modern houses—suburban houses in particular—is the reception hall, which is generally nearly square. This is not difficult to furnish, and if it be of generous size it is generally arranged as a sort of combined sitting and reception-room. If the hall be small, one may have a hall stand or the wall rack and a settle beneath, one with a box seat preferred, as this form provides a useful receptacle for the prompt disposal of wraps, mackintoshes, rubber shoes, etc., where they will be hidden from public view and still be easy of access. If there is a spare corner a "cozy" may be fitted up; or, if not, and a window is available, a broad, low seat will be an attractive feature. A small, low table and a side table with a drawer in it, a number of odd chairs, some that are easy and some selected simply for their quaintness, must not be omitted. One or more growing plants add much to the picturesque appearance of a hall, and as a background for these a pretty three-fold screen may be utilized with good effect.

THE selection of the proper scheme of coloring is an important consideration. When the hall receives a plentiful supply of sunlight at all times of the day, a cool scale of coloring should be selected. With a north room, be generous with the warm rich tints, the dull reds, olives and golden russets and browns. When light is at a premium, gladden the sight with its nearest equivalent, yellow, in its variety. This would be a most distracting color in the glaring light of the noonday sun, but when used upon the walls of a dark and dismal hall it is altogether different. Choice should be made of other colors that will prove harmonious, always the warm rich colors, never the cold. With such a setting any shade of finish in oak or mahogany woodwork will be fitting.

A VERY pretty hall was seen recently. The woodwork was all done in white enamel, and the walls in white and dull yellow and gold. The stair railing was of twisted turnings, four different patterns on every tread, the newels being a twist within a twist. All the furniture used had an antique flavor. The chairs were ribbon-backed Chippendale. The sofa with curved scroll arms was of the English Empire variety, the bench an Italian marriage chest with a back added; an English sixteenth-century oak linen chest did duty as a side table. A round claw-footed table of Colonial days was used to place books and magazines upon. One or two chairs of the manner of the Roman curule form completed a charming ensemble. Such a variety in style and finish is entirely in good taste in the fitting up of the hall. Of all places in the house this is the one for the display of anything quaint and out of common.

THERE is a prevalent opinion in many quarters that the mental equipment of an art dealer or a decorative artist is common to most mortals, and that successful operation of these fields is not difficult. A window on Fifth Avenue, a sign-board, some circulars and a supply of indifferent prints, draperies, drawings and office furniture, are popularly conceived to be all that is needful, else how is the increasing number of art shops to be accounted for, and what other inference is had from the rapidity with which they disappear after short-lived struggles? While admitting that this country presents an extensive art market, continually enlarging, the casual observer would be inclined to think that the art business is overdone. Such is not the fact. On the contrary, the older and well-established dealers are more strongly entrenched than ever, and it is only the newcomers who have a harder time to effect an entrance to good will and good trade. Nor are their efforts at establishment always characterized by the most honorable methods, of which, were there occasion, much more might be written.

IN decoration the assurance of the tyro gifted with a little native good taste and an abundance of pretence is even more evident. It is a natural wish of everyone to decorate his house, and nearly everyone thinks he knows how it should be done. It is but a step from this to the utmost willingness to disburse other people's money in the character of a professional decorative artist, though that title may be unearned and undeserved. The houses ruined by individuals of this description may be numbered by the score. The perfect decorative artist is not he who can make merely a clever sketch. Even this ability is lacking to these artists in trade and must be supplied by a draughtsman, but by dint of hustling they manage to build up a practice which is a continual reproach to any intelligent community, and against all precedents of professional standing. They are the tares that grow among the wheat of *bona-fide* decorators.

THE two classes of decorators that decorate our dwellings resemble the two classes of photographers who are concerned in the making of pictures. There is the professional photographer, who is the slave of his camera, the merit of whose work depends entirely upon the lens-maker and his own knowledge of chemistry and mathematics. However interesting the multifarious details of the process, his work is nothing but a mechanical industry, important only on account of its mechanical accuracy, which is the death of art. There is a vast difference between such pictures made where the tools are master and those made by the self-same instruments in the hands of a master. The camera with its appurtenances in the hands of an artist will give artistic results, and the work of photographers of the highest intelligence and artistic feeling possesses personal, individual aspects, absolutely apart from mechanical considerations.

So, likewise, art in decoration, like art in photography or art in anything else, is the individual view of things and the individual manner of recording them. But this individuality, to be worth anything, means aptitude on the part of the artist amounting to genius, which has been perfected at the expense of much study and practice in his craft. Too many so-called decorators are simply dealers in decorative materials, and their art results a mechanical aggregration of ill-related decorative schemes, their knowledge depending entirely on the artist who formulates a colored design for walls and ceiling, the paper-hanger and the journeyman fabricator of draperies.

Their work is nothing but a mechanical industry, dignified by the name of decoration.

When the real artist attempts to decorate an apartment, how different is the process. He first seeks to obtain an expression of the individuality of his customer, then the best kind of a background, keeping in view the purposes of the room, and next to secure the greatest breadth of effect. Everything that savors of finicky detail is abjured by the artist. The apartment is not only a pictorial composition in itself, but is made to harmonize as to style and color with the other apartments of the house. The handling of so many related conditions in the production of an artistic interior depends entirely upon the ability of the decorator, the work becoming an artistic composition of greater or less value, according to the ability of the artist.

It should be the ambition of the decorator always to animate the inert material with the breath and the breadth of an ideal composition. What a delight it is to one who really loves his art to suggest in decoration of a wall, the pose of a divan, or in the sweep of drapery a sense of luxuriousness but little felt by the owner, an eloquence of movement, a striking simplicity of attitude, or an ingenuous gesture, which the owner himself did not know could be assumed until the fact of it was revealed by the finished picture.

This being so, no words of condemnation can be too great for those hackneyed and artificial aggregations of house-furnishing goods recommended by the dealer in decorations. It is the old distinction between art and imitation, and the great multiplicity of the imitative practitioners depends upon the fact that with the mass of people a successful imitation of the prevailing fashion is sufficient, for art, in its highest manifestations, appeals only to the cultured few.